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23 April 1957

Chief, Industrial Division

Chief, Shipbuilding Branch

ONI Review Article "Soviet Shipbuilding Techniques", Comments on.

1. The Secret Supplement to the winter issue of the ONI Review includes an article on "Soviet Shipbuilding Techniques" which contains factual errors that detract seriously from the value of the article. Several of these errors are discussed in detail below:

(a) Page 19, paragraph 2 of the article states: "Prior to 1951 the Soviet Shipbuilding program had been a naval construction program for all practical purposes."

I/SH Comment: Merchant ship construction in the USSR in 1950 amounted to over 140 million (1955 US dollars) which was about 10 percent of the value of all USSR ship construction in that year.

(b) Page 20, paragraph 6 of the article states: "The construction time for the 12,000 dwt tankers in the shipyard in Kherson has been reduced to 4 months per ship as compared with 12 months using the old method of construction from the keel up."

I/SH Comment: Deliveries of 12,000 dwt tankers from the Kherson Shipyard have been as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Kherson Tanker Deliveries

1953	- 1 vessel
1954	- 4 vessels
1955	- 4 vessels
1956	- 5 vessels

The building facilities at this yard include two horizontal building ways with three building positions on each way. A ship is started at No. 1 position; moved to No. 2 position for further work; and then moved to No. 3 position for completion. From the delivery records cited above the best construction time (from keel laying in position No. 1 to completion in position No. 3) is 12 months.

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(c) Page 21, paragraph 2 of the article states: "Comparing the time required to construct cruisers of similar size in the United States and in Soviet yards a comparable scale was computed for the production of cruisers in Baltic and Krylov Shipyards in Leningrad and for Rosenko Shipyard in Nikolayev. Baltic Shipyard compared directly with average United States shipyards and the other two yards required about 10 percent and 15 percent longer time respectively, under similar conditions."

I/SH Comment: Way time and building time for 22 - 10,000 (std disp.) US light cruisers launched between 1941 and 1946 inclusive varied between 11 and 23 months way time and between 16 and 32 months total building time as indicated in Table 2 below. There have been no light cruisers of this size launched in the United States since 1946.

Table 2

Way Time and Building Time

US Light Cruisers in WW II

Building Yard	Number of Ships Built	-Months Keel to Completion-			---Months Keel to Launch---		
		<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Average</u>
New York Shipbuilding Corporation	5	18	24	21.6	12	16	14.6
Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydocking Corporation	6	19	29	24.0	13	23	16.3
Bethlehem Steel Company Quincy, Mass. (Shipbuilding Division)	6	16	25	20.8	11	17	15.2
Cramp Shipbuilding Company	5	24	32	27.8	14	18	16.2

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Actually the way time of a single ship in a large yard will depend on many things; the relative priority of the vessel in the yard, the material and component availability, manpower available, weather, etc.

With such a spread in way time in the US it seems impossible to state categorically that one USSR shipyard built in a time comparable to the US average and two others had 10 and 15 percent longer way times.


In the USSR, the earlier Sverdlovsk Cruisers built in the several shipyards show 13 and 14 month way times and 23 - 24 month building times. The later cruisers of the same class with apparently lower priorities were on the ways 21 to 46 months (the cruiser on the ways for 46 months was in the Baltic Shipyard in Leningrad - the shipyard indicated by ONI to be 10 to 15 percent superior to the other USSR cruiser building yards.)

(d) Page 21, paragraph 1 of the article states: "This amount of prefabrication shows a production of 1.75 times as great as the estimated production would have been using conventional construction without prefabrication under identical conditions with respect to number of workers,----."

I/SH Comment: While some economy in labor results from prefabrication nothing like the 40 percent reduction in labor indicated above results. Actually all shipyards, including those in the USSR, have been doing some prefabricating for twenty five years. The advantage in prefabrication results from the dispersion of the assembly processes permitting more rapid construction when measured as time on the launching ways.

2. The purpose of this memo is to call attention to the need for factual review and coordination of some of the ONI product pertaining to Shipbuilding. Previous Branch memos of 21 Dec 54 and 12 Feb 57 (paragraph 2 only) bear on this same subject.

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